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Visits to national forest ski areas rise sharply

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Recommended Citation

University of Montana–Missoula. Office of University Relations, "Visits to national forest ski areas rise sharply" (1980). *University of Montana News Releases, 1928, 1956-present*. 30851.
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VISITS TO NATIONAL FOREST
SKI AREAS RISE SHARPLY

MISSOULA---

Despite the rising costs of ski equipment and lift tickets, skier visits to Montana's national forest ski areas increased 73.6 percent between 1972 and 1979, according to an article recently published by the University of Montana Bureau of Business and Economic Research.

Writing for the Montana Business Quarterly, editor Mary Lenihan examines lift ticket prices and the number of skier visits over the past six ski seasons at the 13 Montana ski areas located on national forest lands.

One reason for the large increase in skier visits is that several ski areas have expanded their facilities by adding more runs and lifts, Lenihan reports. In addition, most of the state's ski areas are located at higher elevations where there is usually enough snow to guarantee a good ski season.

Lenihan also briefly discusses the economic impact of the ski industry on Montana. She notes that it is impossible to separate the percentage of retail trade and service industry revenues derived from the ski industry. But skiers do contribute to these components by patronizing local stores, restaurants, and gasoline stations. Out-of-state skiers and Montanans traveling to ski areas away from home patronize food and lodging facilities en route. The ski areas themselves generate revenue from lift tickets sales, restaurant and lodging facilities, equipment rental shops, and ski schools.

(over)

VISITS TO NATIONAL FOREST--add one

Skiing is a popular winter sport in Montana, but Lenihan points out that the industry may be adversely affected in the future if high energy costs make it too expensive for most skiers to drive to a ski area and pay the increasing prices for lift tickets.

She adds that economists suggest there will be a drop in the number of potential skiers because of the declining birth rate.

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